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April 7, 2011
Testimony HB370

*Montana Preservation Alliance saves and protects Montana's historic places,
traditional landscapes and cultural heritage.*

SENATE FISH AND GAME

EXHIBIT NO. 2

DATE 4/7/11

BILL NO. HB 370

Montana's license plate fee currently funds maintenance and improvements of some of our state's most outstanding landmarks, from buffalo jumps and pictograph sites, to battlefields and ghost towns. These are among the most remarkable historic and cultural sites in Montana, and why in past decades they were made into state parks.

The license plate fees currently benefit our 19 historic or archaeological parks, which include 7 National Historic Landmarks. A study by Lary Dilsaver and Bill Wyckoff at MSU concluded in 2009 that many of our state parks are of such a caliber that in past they were considered for National Park status. Our historic and cultural parks are listed below, and those that were considered for National Parks are highlighted in bold:

Chief Plenty Coups NHL

Anaconda Smelter Smokestack

Council Grove

Giant Springs Historic Landmark

Pictograph Cave National Historic Landmark

Tower Rock

Madison Buffalo Jump

Missouri Headwaters NHL

First Peoples Buffalo Jump

Beaverhead Rock

Rosebud Battlefield NHL

Clarks' Lookout

Bannack NHL

Traveler's Rest NHL

Elkhorn Ghost Town

Pirogue Island

Granite Ghost Town

Makoshika

Fort Owen

Lewis & Clark Caverns

In addition, the **Virginia City National Historic Landmark** and the three major Lewis & Clark interpretive sites in the state. All of these sites are part of our heritage and an important anchor to our state's second most important industry – tourism. So this bill is both about good state stewardship and caring about the past, and about boosting local businesses and creating jobs by reinforcing the amenities that draw visitors and tourists to every corner of our state.

Funding our state heritage through the relatively painless license plate fee is a proven way for Montanans to support all of these treasures of our past, and the investment made to maintain them will reap benefits for generations to come. In the interest of taking care of this legacy and protecting these valuable state assets we urge you to pass HB 370.